WHIRRAKEE

June 1988 Vol. 9 No. 5

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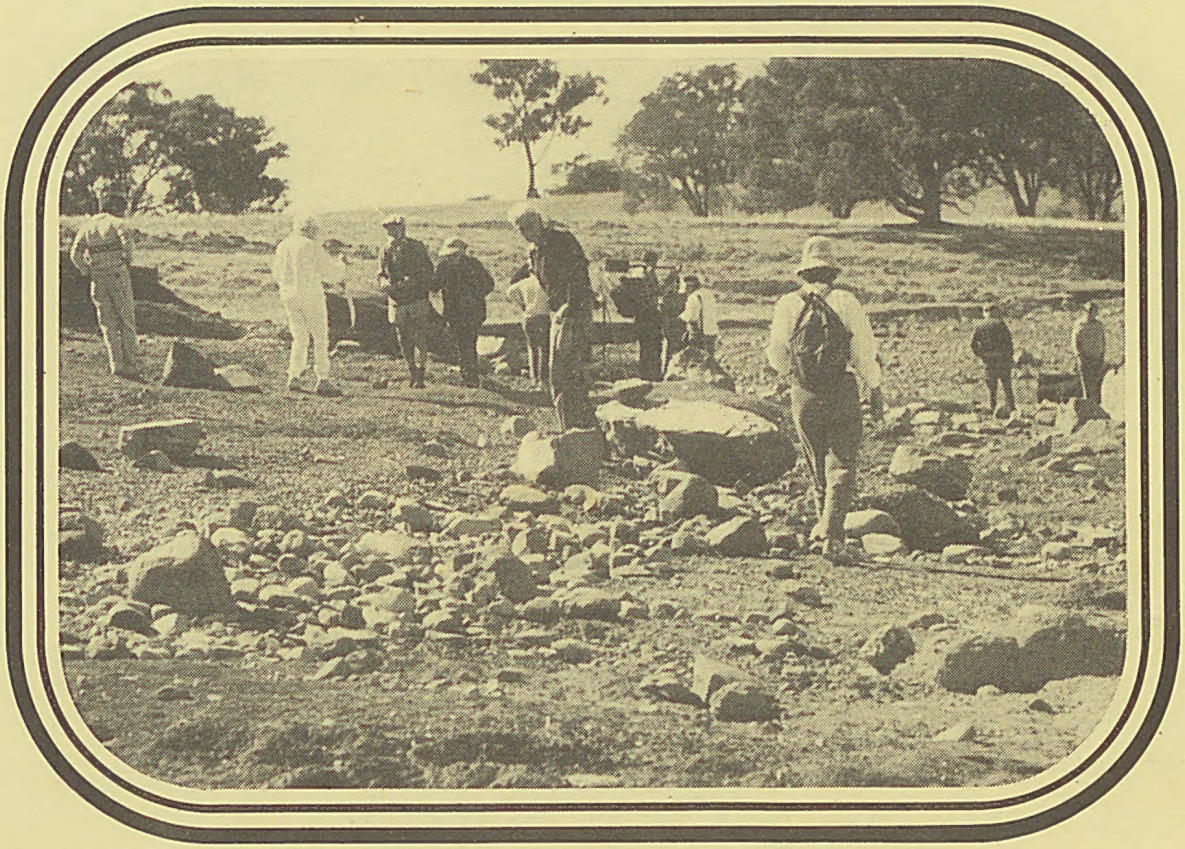

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

WHIRRAKEE, VOL. 9 NO. 5 JUNE 1988

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club.
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (Acacia williamsonii) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo Region.

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COVER PICTURE: Club members on a recent Geology excursion, hunting for glacial scarred rocks on the glacial pavements at Derrinal.
PHOTO: Rod Orr.

EACH AUTHOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN HIS OR HER ARTICLE

Deadline for articles for the next issue will be Wednesday June 8. Contributions sent by post should be addressed to Graham Hill, 31 Curnow St., Golden Square, 3555.

(Typed contributions are preferred but if this is not possible, then please make every effort to use neat, legible hand writing or printing.)

Articles from Whirrakee may be reproduced, but permission should be sought from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment given to the author and the Club.

All back numbers except Vol.3(10) are available, at a cost of 80 cents each. Complete sets of Vols 1-2 and 4-6 can be supplied at a cost of $8.00 per volume. (Postage is not included in the above prices.)

CONSERVATION HISTORY OF THE WHIPSTICK - PART 11

by Peter Ellis.

In the last issue I referred to two cleared portions of land within the Kamarooka forest near "Millwood Dam" which had been acquired by an agent and then exchanged to the Forests Commission. Originally there were two Millwood Dams on the old maps, as Frank discovered, and the one I was referring to had in fact been re-named (by Frank?) "Rush Dam", and known by this name for some time now. Sorry for this slip up, the other Millwood Dam is the well known water reserve on the corner of the crown allotment 15 of Whirrakee B and fronting the Millwood Road. Also I accidently ommitted allotment 20 of Whirrakee B from the list of blocks acquired from the Ploughright/Wellstead land partnership. Now back to the story.

Had it not been for the I.D.O. most of the Whipstick land purchases would not have eventuated, except perhaps for one or two from landowners sympathetic to the cause. We are all merely tennants caretaking land for future generations, and it is a pity past attitudes made it such an I.D.O. with some of its less pleasant consequences had to be resorted to. Setting this aside, the fact is, many local landowners whose toed we had not wished to tread on were selling their land anyway.

As early as 1973 an Insurance Company had purchased Whipstick blocks in the Neilborough section and Inland Securities had acquired a block or two on the Tennyson Rd. The I.D.O. fortunately was imposed before the speculators (except Robertson) could'develop' the land. There is no doubt in my mind much of the Whipstick today would be cleared and boasting piggeries and the like, and subdivided for hobby farms and housing lots. Only one or two of the old pioneering families would have remained maintaining traditional farming practices and eucalyptus oil production.

In May 1975 Inland Securities had applied to subdivide the 194 acres of allot. 16A of Parish of Bagshot into lots from 5 to 17 acres. The terms of the I.D.O. would not however allow this and the Club urged the Minister for Forests to instigate or support the purchase of this block for the park along with the adjoining Tennyson Rd. blocks of 19 19A and 18 (Bagshot). These blocks are a veritable wildflower garden in Spring and an important landscape feature on the earlier Whipstick approaches which lead to the wonderful undulating ocean of Mallee of the northern crown lands (now part of the Kamarooka State Park).

At this time in 1975 the Club was becoming more and more concerned about the Tennyson Rd. frontages and landscape, and the fact we had not earlier played up the importance of retaining these features. In March 1976 Bob Allen and myself presented a talk to the Central and Northern Victorian Branch of the National Trust with the view of having them seek a landscape classification over the above mentioned section to aid its conservation and boost the case for necessary land purchases.

OnJune 10th 1976 Bill Perry's important historical book "Tales of the Whipstick" was launched. This book drew my attention to a number of historical features which I had been previously unaware. This included the old log walled dam near the Camp Hotel and the slab hut "Shamrock Hotel" at Miller's Flat. In the Spring of that year I led a National Trust excursion which took in stopovers at these features, the famous Whirrakee Wattle Paddock, Hartland's Eucalyptus Distillery and Historic Farm, and the Tennyson Rd. The object was to create interest in the historical features as well and aid their protection.

CONSERVATION HISTORY OF THE WHIPSTICK - PART 11 continued

In the case of the old log Shamrock Hotel, it had the opposite effect. The owner was most irate at the number of tourists peeping over his fence and was fairly abusive. Some of the National Trust visitors exchanged a few terse words with this person, being understandably offended and dismayed with his attitudes. I believe this episode triggered the demise of the old hotel a few weeks later.

Although the National Trust, including their Melbourne representatives, were extremely impressed with the Whipstick and the more specific proposals re the landscape classification, nothing eventuated at the time. Apparently the parent body was awaiting a formal application from the local branch who in turn had thought the visiting Melbourne representatives were handling it. A few years later Chris Bunn found out about the earlier landscape classification proposals, and you will recall his wife Sandra had become an active member of the local branch of the National Trust (Secretary?). The application was made and the classification finally came into being.

Also in 1975 the historical importance of the New Moon Mines area and the scenic views of the Lightning Hill Lookout and environs were realised. These somehow had not been included in the Forest Park and the Club wrote to the Forest Part Advisory Committee suggesting this be followed up and the addition implemented.

In the february of 1975 the Club received a letter from the House of Representative Standing Committee asking for submissions on land preservation in the Bendigo district. Naturally a 1974 Whipstick submission was the response. Probably as a follow-up to this and the countless letters and submissions to both the State and Federal Governments for funding for land purchases, a Whipstick inspection was arranged. This took place on March 21st 1975, when Mr.Joe Forshaw (Australian Parrot expert) of the Federal Department of Environment and Conservatio and Mr.Pat Corr of the State Department of Conservation visited the area. Bill Flentje and George Jennings of the Forests Commission, and Jack Kellam and myself representing the Bendigo F.N.C. led the tour.

The visitors were obviously impressed with the Whipstick and agreed that it was of National significance. But they saw difficulties in having funds allocated for land purchase to a non National Park type situation, i.e. to a Forest Park in which commercial forest product utilisation could occur. This was not a new problem to the B.F.N.C., and a risk we knowingly took in 1971 in applying for a Forest Park. As outlined in part 4 (Oct.1987 Whirrakee Vol.8 No.9) it was an only straw to grasp and a very reasonable one given the circumstances of the time. The conservation officers also perceived the problems at hand and agreed to do their best to overcome the difficulties. Subsequently when finances did come through for land purchases it was a requirement that the allotments could not be utilised, e.g. for eucalyptus harvesting, and that such lands would be held in abeyance for final inclusion in the type of park to be ultimately set up, following the Land Conservation Council recommendations.

One surprising comment from Joe Forshaw and Pat Corr was that they placed our list of priorities at the lower end of scale. In their opinion the B.F.N.C. nominated blocks were uncleared and relatively safe under the I.D.O. (Next issue you will find at least two fairly precious blocks, 49 of 12 Egerton and 13 of 15 Bagshot were not so safe). They considered the cleared land (enclaval to the greenbelt and public land) as needing immediate attention as it would take so long to regenerate.

CONSERVATION HISTORY OF THE WHIPSTICK - PART 11 continued

So it was a contrasting set of values we'd never before considered or encountered. In fact we had always felt the developed blocks too expensive compared to the others, and the list would have been enormous if they had been included as well. Later we were to add one or two obvious ones to the list e.g. Allotment 7 of Neilborough which is in the centre of the crown lands, completely bounded by public land in fact, and standing out like a billiard board. According to Jack Kellam this block was once the stronghold of the Purple-gaped Honeyeater. It isn't totally cleared, and there would be merit in having it acquired and fully regenerated with bull mallee.

Overall only a smaller portion of land internal to the outer greenbelt was cleared, and it did have different wildlife values to fauna that benefited from open sections of grassland. If these blocks were to be acquired, they would have been at the bottom of our list, their main value perhaps eventually in terms of camping areas and picnic sites. As it is they were not included and we felt it didn't hurt to have the occasional resident in the area keeping watchdog. (More of this later.)

The Forestry boys however were concerned about the freehold enclaves in the Eaglehawk section of Forest Park. They posed fire protection risks and other problems such as that of wandering stock and domestic animals, insecure fencing, road access and so on. The establishment of hobby farms, piggeries and goat farms in the area was an additional worry, particularly as this section was outside the boundary and regulation of the I.D.O. It was these factors and the coming onto the market of Bacon's block near Skylark Rd. that had earlier prompted the letters and deputation to the Minister for Forests, the Hon.F.J. Granter May 1974. (Part 9 Whirrakee April 1988 Vol.9. No.3) Nothing eventuated and I believe the situation remains the same today, perhaps worse, as the number of ugly housing lots in this section and on the Marong Shire approach stand testiment.

During the mid to late 1970's the Forests Commission engaged two University students studying forestry to investigate and make recommendations on the Whipstick. The first came up with recommendations for zoning the areas into sections for primitive areas, timbering, eucalyptus cutting and so on, and the nomination of suitable picnic sites. The later one I believe concentrated only on the Eucalyptus oil industry, and this may have come from recommendations in our 1974 submission.

By May 1976 the Whipstick road names had been sorted out and later the Forest Part Advisory Committee was successful in having the picnic sites and toilets established, signs on most of the major roads and tracks erected, and the Whipstick map published and available to the public. Then the nature trail at Shadbolt's was established and more recently in Joe Morley's time, the look-out on Flagstaff Hill.

I can't give a year, but it was probably about 1976/77, the first conservation extension officer for the state, Mr.Jeremy Chellacombe, was appointed to this region. Jerry was vitally interested in the Whipstick and with his pleasant outgoing nature made his presence known to many of the Whipstick landowners, exchanging sound conservation principles on the one hand for viewpoints and problems perceived by these people. He carried out his own on site investigations of both public lands and listed freehold priority blocks. Ultimately he was successful in having a university student engaged to complete this program and to make management and modified acquisition proposals. This resulted in another interesting approach and outlook.

CONSERVATION HISTORY OF THE WHIPSTICK - PART 11 continued

Whilst acknowledging the importance of retaining the greater Whipstick greenbelt, Jerry questioned the need to acquire it all. He considered this would only create problems with a giant park close to a city with such a large population and a Ranger hopelessly trying to cope with the caretaking. Jerry threw into the ring the idea of having the odd 250-600 acre freehold block remaining as such but totally protected and preserved except for about a 5-10 acre back corner which could house the owners who would intensively farm that section (i.e. a piggery or similar project), IN this way a smattering of people would reside in the peripheral areas keeping an eye overall and assisting with the caretaking. Perhaps this was based a little on the British system of managing National Parks.

I believe the Club's main concern with this proposal would have been intrusive odours in an otherwise fresh air environment and potentially beautiful park, and the problem of containing effluent and so on. We've always been paranoid about feral pigs and goats having any chance at all in becoming established in the Whipstick,and this could have been a real risk. However perhaps "chooks" might have been a reasonable proposition?

An idea we floated in the 1974 submission was the feasability of replanting some of the cleared enclaves and particularly peripheral areas such as the "Big Desert" with pure stands of high oil yielding strains of blue mallee. This would provide a compatable buffer useage to the park on what was otherwise useless land - short of the establishment of piggeries or housing lots etc.. It would also have provided a means of reducing or even eliminating oil productior from the park proper. It would take thorough scientific investigation by the appropriate department as of course we didn't have the expertise to say it would work or be economical. But it would have been worth following up. We were aware it took 20 years for a mallee to mature, and whilst this seems a long time, fourteen years have already passed. Pines take longer. The other consideration would have been methods of harvesting with respect to erosion problems - it would be no point in having double standards about eliminated harvesting on public land partly for this reason, and encouraging it otherwise.

At about the same time as Jerry Chellacombe's arrival, the Loddon/Campaspe Regiona Planning Authority was set up and the Town and Country Planning Board handed over administration of the Whipstick I.D.O. to the Authority. The new executive officer of the Authority was Malcolm Jack who also diligently carried a series of investigations to improve planning procedures over the Whipstick, and to work towards the ultimate conversion of the I.D.O. to a PLanning Scheme. The I.D.O. boundary needed re-alignment in a few places. Some cleared sections of peripheral land on the Neilborough secter had been inadvertently included in the I.D.O. and should have excised, whilst on the Goornong side regeneration of the "Big Desert" at that time was considerable. There was serious thought towards extending the I.D.O. boundary to include at least some of the areas adjoinging the important allotments 49 of 12 Egerton and 13 of 15 Bagshot. (Particularly Allot.18 of Whirrakee.) The famous "Hakea Wattle Paddock" (now Whirrakee Wattle) may have been another feature under consideration, and this in turn may have triggered some of the clearing of that area. At any rate I recall joining in with Malcolm Jack and Jerry Chellacombe on several trips around the Whipstick and discussing possible modification to the I.D.O. boundary. I don't know that any of the proposals were achieved as both Malcolm and Jerry not long after left Bendigo.

WETLANDS SURVEY - COUNT NO. 3

by Don Franklin

Count No. 3 was scheduled for the 3 week period commencing 26/3/88. This was rather less than 3 months after Count No. 2, as No. 2 had been delayed so as to co-incide with the annual pre-season duck count.

1. Lake Stewart: not checked, presumed dry.
2. Tang Tang: not checked, presumed dry - a very safe assumption.
3. Winghee Swamp: Down to about 80% of full surface area, the margin having retreated an average of about 20 metres; counted 26/3/88 by myself.
4. Bendigo Sewerage Farm: May Swamp remains dry; other water areas at normal surface area, although Pond No. 6 was down by half a metre or so, exposing muddy margins around the islands and along the eastern edge; counted 27/3/88 by myself.
5. Barkers Creek Reservoir: down to about 70% of surface area, the margins having retreated an average of about 20 metres, exposing an extensive treeless margin of mud and in parts, herbage; counted 27/3/88 by Glenise Moors and myself.

Count results are on the Table on the next page.

General changes to waterbird populations

Since the early February count, Black-tailed Native Hens have re-appeared and in reasonable numbers, with a scattered flock of 52 at Winghee and at least 15 on the small dam beside Wallenjoe Road at the Sewerage Farm.

The variety of waders has increased markedly since the February count. The Red-kneed Dotterel has re-appeared after not being located during Count No. 2, with a party of 18 at Winghee and 5 at the Sewerage Farm. The numbers of Black-fronted Plovers (Dotterels) rose at all 3 count sites. There were 5 species of waders at the Sewerage Farm compared to 2 last time, but overall numbers were down as much fewer Masked Lapwings (Spur-winged Plovers) were located. At Barkers Creek, 30 Waders of 2 species contrasted to 4 of 1 species present last time. However, only one migratory wader was seen, a Wood Sandpiper at the Sewerage Farm.

Winghee Swamp

What a contrast to last time! Nine species instead of 24. Two ducks instead of over 600. Were it not for the large scattered party of Native Hens on the exposed mudflat, and the 7 Black-fronted Plovers and 18 Red-kneed Dotterels hidden together in a secluded corner, I would have declared Winghee dead. Even the Spoonbills and solitary Ibis were only seen flying over, and the two lonesome Grey Teal headed for the hills, leaving the Swamp to me and two forlorn shooters.

Is the change the result of disturbance by shooters? Or are there more subtle causes, perhaps in declining water levels, increasing salinity (presumably), the change of the seasons, or exhaustion of food supply?

Barkers Creek Reservoir

There were no dramatic changes to the previous count. The 27 Wood Ducks were not recorded at all last time, but could just have easily been on a farm dam just over the hill last time. One family containing 5 large young Grey Teal were seen.

WETLANDS SURVEY - COUNT NO. 3 continued

SPECIES +[1]	WINGHEE SWAMP	BENDIGO SEWERAGE FARM	BARKERS CREEK RESERVOIR
Great Crested Grebe	-	-	3
Hoary-headed Grebe	-	5	29
Australasian Grebe	-	3	5
Unidentified small Grebe	-	485+[2]	-
Pelican	-	-	-
Great Cormorant	-	9	1
Little Black Cormorant	-	-	1
Little Pied Cormorant	-	2	8
Pacific Heron	-	-	1
White-faced Heron	-	3	2
Sacred Ibis	-	-	-
Straw-necked Ibis	1	2	13
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	4	-	-
Black Swan	3	203	2
Australian Shelduck	-+[3]	45	-
Pacific Black Duck	-	18	34
Grey Teal	2	377	30+[4]
Chestnut Teal	-	44	-
Australian Shoveller	-	70	-
Pink-eared Duck	-	54+[5]	-
Hardhead	-	38	-
Maned Duck	-	-	27
Blue-billed Duck	-	7	-
Musk Duck	-	33	18
Marsh Harrier	-	-	-
Whistling Kite	-	-	2
Black-tailed Native Hen	52	15	-
Dusky Moorhen	-	16	3
Purple Swamphen	-	1	-
Eurasian Coot	-	302	165
Masked Lapwing	2	25	17
Red-kneed Dotterel	18	5	-
Black-fronted Plover	7	11	13
Pied Stilt	-	4	-
Wood Sandpiper	-	1	-
Silver Gull	-	15	-
Glamorous Reed Warbler	1	-	-
Little Grassbird	-	-	-
White-fronted Chat	-	10	-
No. of species	9	27	19
No. of ducks	2	686	99
No. of waders	27	46	30

+[1] Includes species found on the previous official Wetland Survey but not located this time.
+[2] Probably mostly Hoary-headed Grebe
+[3] One dead bird
+[4] Plus one clutch of 5 3/4-grown young
+[5] Plus one clutch of 3 1/4-grown young.

WETLANDS SURVEY-COUNT NO. 3 continued

Bendigo Sewerage Farm

The feature of the Sewerage Farm was the 44 Chestnut Teal and 70 Shovellers. This is by far the most I have seen of these ducks there, with one or two and a dozen or so respectively being more usual counts.

The Blue-billed Ducks were still present, with 7 counted this time.

A Pink-eared Duck accompanied 3 small young on Pond No. 5.

Silver Gull numbers were down from 220 to 15. It is possible, however, that more were present at the treatment ponds or the first couple of ponds, which are not counted as they smell a lot and fewer waterbirds are usually found there. For the same reason, it is possible that a number of Masked Lapwings were overlooked, or they could have been out in the paddocks.

Next count

I haven't been notified of the exact dates yet, but presumably it will take place in late June/ early July.

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BIRD OBSERVERS GROUP MEETING REPORT

Members enjoyed a Cook's Tour of the Bird World on May 5th when Dr. Robbie Brown, an Irish dentist from Warragul was guest speaker. He had recently been bird-watching in India where he visited such diverse regions as the Kashmir Lakes, Darjeeling, Bhutan, Assam and Delhi.

Consequently we were treated to slides of a great variety of delightful scenery, birds and animals. India has some 440 different birds, but being in the Northern Hemisphere about half were familiar to Dr. Brown. However he was able to photograph the Great Indian Bustard, one of his main motives for visiting India. Standing as high as an emu, it is endangered species. He also showed us the rare Siberian Crane, beautiful Flamingoes and many others such as the odd-looking Hoopoe, and of course, the Asian White-backed Vultures going about their work of being garbage disposals with great efficiency.

Then, on the last day a huge Adjutant Stork arrived to be photographed. We then were shown highlights of other trips to Israel, Morocco, Rumania, Canada and California.

Thanks Robbie. There will be doubtless a mass migration of bird watchers to India in the near future.

Don Franklin distributed the Bird Check Lists to members, and Maisie Ross reported that Slaters "Field Guide to Australian Birds" is back in the bookshops.

THE WANDERER BUTTERFLY

by Bettine Finlay.

The current Summer-Autumn season, with prolonged dry, sunny weather has produced a phenomenal number of these beautiful butterflies.
Their food is the Swan Plant or Milk Weed (Ascelepias fruiticosa), a dull, narrow leafed shrub which generally attains the height of six feet. It is a native of South Africa, and according to Stirling Macoboy ("What Flower is That?) is grown more for the amusement value of its swan-shaped green seed pods than for anything else.

In my garden I have some 60 or more of these plants which are now completely stripped of their foliage.

Following the first flush of butterflies, I counted at least 100 chrysalises, and even at this late stage (3rd May) the butterflies are still appearing. Many small caterpillars are also to be seen, but they will not attain maturity because of the lack of their sole source of food - the leaves of the Swan Plant. The caterpillars are also prone, at all stages of growth, to the depredations of the Preying Mantis.

This season has also been notable for the number of 'Albinos'. After the first flush of butterflies at least five appeared. Their whiteness is made more vivid by the presence of black lines on the wings.

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MARYBOROUGH FIELD NATURALISTS BOOKLET

Members with an interest in "our golden past", will be pleased to learn that Maryborough Field Naturalists Club has published a sixty-one page booklet "Exploring Maryborough and District".

Available from our Treasurer, Helene Boon at a cost of $4.00, the publication includes aboriginal pre-history, walks and drives featuring notable buildings and places of historical and natural history interest. Illustrated with photographs of birds, mining relics, aboriginal rock wells and natural features, the booklet offers good value for visitors to this colourful region of central Victoria.

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WESTERN VICTORIA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUBS ASSOCIATION CAMPOUTS

BALLARAT August 27-28,1988.
WARBY RANGES October 21-23, 1988
GEELONG March 11-13th 1989. Combined with V.F.N.C.A. campout.
CRESWICK October 21-23, 1989

For further details contact Rob Moors

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CONSERVATION - DO SOMETHING POSITIVE

by Bill Holsworth.

"And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat its fruits, and its goodness, but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination."
Jeremiah 2:7

It's hard to work up enthusiasm for environmental problems off somewhere west of the Simpson Desert or in the frigid wastelands of Antarctica. But in this Bicentennial year it is time to take a look at the management of Australia's natural environment. The view we get is one of eroded landscapes, saline soils, and empty places where once there was forests and grasslands, birds, mammals and other wildlife.

This abomination of our heritage was largely the result of ignorance, but greed also played a part. It serves little useful purpose to look back and blame our ancestors or previous governments. Instead, in this Bicentennial year we must look forward and resolve first to halt the degradation and then to begin programs of restoration. If we do less, we are more guilty than previous generations, for we cannot plead ignorance.

HABITAT, the bi-monthly magazine of the Australian Conservation Foundation, started this year several articles and a special supplement "OUR LAND NEEDS HELP". The first article asks the question "Why has a wealthy and developed society allowed its land resources, the basis of its economic wealth, to become so badly degraded?"

It points out that the governments recognized the problems of soil erosion and salinity long ago and established soil conservation services but they have largely attended to land degradation problems only in the time of crisis, when the over exploited systems collapse completely during drought.

There is sufficient scientific understanding of the ecological processes to reverse the trend, but the governments manage by crisis. Why? The article concludes that "social, economic and political attitudes have not changed in accordance with the available scientific knowledge" and "In Australia, we have not embraced a conservation land ethic".

What is this "land ethic" that we should embrace? The term was coined by the American pioneer of wildlife management and wilderness ecology, Aldo Leopold. He stated in a small book, Sand County Almanac that: "A land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such." Leopold explains this further "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

The February edition of the magazine HABITAT has two more articles on the subject of Land Management. In "Troubled Heartlands" the author informs us that at least half of the Australian mammals now extinct came from the desert region and many others in the arid lands are threatened with extinction.

Overgrazing by introduced European animals is the major cause of the land degradation in the arid zone. They accuse the pastoral industry leaders of using their political influence to ensure that soil conservation legislation is not enforced. The authors conclude that pasture management must improve and suggest that the non-viable properties should be withdrawn from Freeholding.

CONSERVATION - DO SOMETHING POSITIVE continued

The magazine has an 8 page lift-out section titled "Our Land Needs Help". The text is short but the pictures of erosion are dramatic. Borrow a copy from the B.F.N.C. library, the Bendigo Public Library, or the B.C.A.E. library and think about the issues raised in these articles.

It is hard to work up enthusiasm for environmental problems that are far away, but you can do something positive. Join organizations and donate money to organizations that are effectively attacking these problems. Realize that money donated to organizations such as the Australian Conservation Foundation are TAX DEDUCTIBLE. Such donations have the effect of diverting money from General Revenue to Conservation. Read, become informed, and encourage others to develop a land ethic. Public attitudes must change and the voting public can change the way land is used, the way forests are managed, and the levels of pollution in our air and water.

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COPY OF A LETTER FROM VICTORIAN CONSERVATION TRUST 29th April 1988.

Dear Friend,

It is with great pleasure that I enclose a copy of our Annual Report for 1987.

You will observe that in addition to a range of activities we are vigorously seeking to promote the covenanting of private lands by property owners. In this way, we believe that valuable lands can be protected without the need for expensive acquisition and public management.

Should you know of property owners who may be interested in preserving special areas in this way please let us know.

I trust the report will be of interest to you and invite you to contact me should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,
Warwick Forge, Director.

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EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO ROB WATKINS, written by Don McKenzie-Smellie of Dee Why.N.S.W

When not acting in T.V. soapies, Don flies tourists over Sydney in a light plane. To break this "boredom", he acts as courier for the Roylene Cruises on the Whitsunday Passage run and is actually paid for it!

"Talk about nature involvement - recently a young Rainbow Lorikeet was attacked by a Currawong. It dropped to the ground where a neighbours cat grabbed it. I grabbed the cat and made him drop the bird which I nursed for a few days. After putting a broken leg in plaster, I placed it in a cage, kept it warm and provided feed.
Its mother arrived in answer to its calling, with a second squeaking baby, early the following morning, so I sat him on my hand where the mother also sat and proceeded to feed the injured youngster. Three times each day, mother arrived to feed the youngster in addition to what I fed him. After a few days he took off after Mum. When I hear them about I whistle, the young fellow lands on my hand followed by Mum!
Makes me feel a bit closer to nature."

* * * * * * * * * * *

OMISSION: A leaflet containing further details about covenanting private land is available from the Committee.

BIRD NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

From the B.O.G. meeting of 6/5/88.

Observations

Starlings, 50)
Musk Lorikeets, 25)
Swift Parrots, 7) feeding on scale in the one Yellow Box,
White-plumed Honeyeater, several) Strathfieldsaye, approx. 14/4/88.

Swift Parrot, 20-30, Kooyoora State Park, 19-30/4/88
Flame Robin, 1 male, Mandurang South, 25/4/88
Flame Robin, 1 male, Strathfieldsaye, 21/4/88
Noisy Friarbird, 1, Strathfieldsaye, 15/4/88
Blue-faced Honeyeater feeding young, Kennington Reservoir, 27/4/88
Cockatiel, 1, Kennington Reservoir, 27/4 & 1/5/88
Crimson Rosella, 2 immatures, Inglewood, 4/5/88
Pelican, 11 flying over, Calivil, 25/4/88
Little Eagle, 1 juvenile, Mandurang South, 6/5/88
Barn Owl, roadkills, one on each occasion at exactly the same spot on the Calder Highway at Leichardt, 23/3 & 29/4/88
Spotted Turtle-dove chasing Grey Currawong, Flora Hill, 13/4/88
White-browed Babblers nest-building, 6, Lyal Glen, 15/4/88
Rainbow-birds, 4, Sedgwick, 12/4/88

Lists submitted

Wildflower Drive, Strathfieldsaye, 11/4/88
Marong Forest, 20/4/88
Flora Hill, list for April 1988, in a native garden.
Sedgwick, 9-11/4/88
Epsom, 19-20/4/88
Lyal Glen, January to April 1988.

Notes

The population of scale insects has burgeoned this autumn, and this has provided a feast for a number of species, primarily Musk Lorikeets, Swift Parrots and White-plumed Honeyeaters, as might be expected. However, introduced birds are also adapting to this source of food and adopting strategies which, while not as effective as those of specialized native birds like the parrots, which scrape the leaf clean of scale in one deft action, nevertheless provide them with valuable energy at a time of the year when the pickings are slim. The Starlings noted were seen to perch clumsily among the foliage, lunging at the lerps while off balance, knocking the scales at the first attempt, and picking off the insects at the second. A further report is of 20 House Sparrows at the Bendigo C.A.E. on 12/5/88. The sparrows were hanging upside down like small, fat honeyeaters, picking lerps off the leaves, and sometimes hovering like Weebills in an apparently unsuccessful attempt to reach lerps on the outermost leaves.

The winter visitors have continued to arrive. Records of Flame Robins from Mandurang South and Strathfieldsaye, Swift Parrots at Kooyoora State Park and Strathfieldsaye, and a Noisy Friarbird at Strathfieldsaye represent a continuation of the influx begun last month.

BIRD NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS continued

The few boxes and ironbarks between the Kennington Reservoir and the busy roads nearby are home to a number of large honeyeaters. Last year, a single copse of half-a-dozen trunks supported about 12 Noisy Friarbirds, some Red Wattlebirds, Noisy Miners, Blue-faced Honeyeaters and was visited by Musk Lorikeets, and this situation continued for some weeks. So far, although the ironbarks are in flower, there has not been such an influx this year. However, Red Wattlebirds, Noisy Miners and a few Blue-faced Honeyeaters are to be seen there. Blue-faced Honeyeaters are reported regularly from the vicinity of the Reservoir, and appear to be resident there. They were seen feeding young on what appeared to have been wood-bearing larvae on the 27th of April Noisy Miners were also feeding young near the Reservoir in early April, so 1987/88, with its long, sunny summer, appears to have provided a long breeding season for these birds.

A single Cockatiel has been residing at the eastern edge of the Reservoir for some months now. A group of 7 Cockatiels was reported in early January at the same spot. Whether the bird living there now was a member of that flock that stayed on, or an aviary escapee, is impossible to tell, but it was first observed soon after the date when the flock was seen.

Many birds resent the appearance of a Grey Currawong, a notorious nest robber. But who has ever heard of pigeons reacting aggressively? I wonder who was most surprised, the observer or the currawong, when a turtle-dove, with much flapping of wings, landed just behind it. The currawong moved about 6 feet, and the turtledove followed it. For 5 minutes they both moved around the two trees in this manner. The dove didn't try to peck - just flapped close behind the currawong. Eventually both disappeared, and then the currawong re-appeared alone.

Probably no other bird marks the changing of the seasons to bird watchers more than the Rainbow-birds. Their arrival in about late September marks the onset of the busy season in the bird world, a busyness to which the Rainbow-bird contributes in fine style with wheeling flights, distinctive calls and brilliant colours; and their departure is regretted both for its own sake and for the impending cold weather it heralds. As a result, the Bird Observers Group has quite a collection of arrival, and surprisingly, departure date records. But no Rainbow-bird till now has been recorded in April, the previous latest being 25/3/82 in the Kimbolton Forest. The appearance of 4 at Sedgwick on 12/4/88 is over 2 weeks later than this, and is notable further in that the birds were feeding at treetop height rather than flying high on their migration. The calls they uttered were the usual 'residential' calls rather than the migratory call.

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EXCURSION REPORT by Win Demeo

On Sunday the 15th May 1988, 11 members of the Club went to Mt. Alexander, on a foggy damp day. We walked about three kilometres over very rocky terrain. We saw the following birds:- Flame Robin, Scarlet Robin, Jacky Winter, White-eared Honeyeater, Grey Currawong, Magpie, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Kookaburra.

Thanks to Graham Hill for leading the excursion, and to the various people that helped me over the rough patches.

Reg Smart saw some fungi, but it was not a good day for photography.

BIRD OBSERVERS GROUP - BIRD OF THE NIGHT DISCUSSION - SEPTEMBER 1987

LONG -BILLED CORELLA - CACUTUA TENUIROSTRIS

APPEARANCE: A mostly white cockatoo, with a little reddish colour on the forehead, and a thin line of red around the throat, yellow under wings and tail, pale greyish-blue round the eye, the upper mandible extends a long way past the end of the lower mandible. The Corellas have crests which are inconspicuous.

CALLS: Two distinctive calls, one a harsh screech, like a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, and a more pleasant quavering call.

HABITAT: Grassy open forests and woodlands, grazing and croplands, and timbered watercourses close to such areas. They are found mainly in the western part of Victoria, and across the Murray River into the Riverina in N.S.W. A separate race of the Long-billed Corrella occurs in Western Australia.

FOOD: Their food consists of seeds, roots, and corms, especially of Onion Grass - Romulea rosea. In regard to the corms of Onion Grass the birds strip the outer brown covering and feed on the white interior.

BREEDING: The birds nest in large tree hollows usually high up, the nest consisting of decayed wood. Two or three white oval eggs are laid, and the incubation period is about 24 days. Generally the male bird incubates during the day the the female at night. The fledging period is about seven weeks, and the young are fed for a further three weeks after leaving the nest. Both parents feed the young.

GENERAL: Long-billed Corellas are reported to have been common in the Bendigo District in the early days of this century, but trapping and possibly change of habitat, especially suitable nest trees may have contributed to their decrease in numbers. Some increase in numbers however has been noticeable in the past 20 years. Outside the breeding season, the birds tend to occur in flocks of up to 50 or more birds, and occasionally flocks of up to 200 or more birds are found, particularly on the banks of the Murray River.
Sometimes Long-billed Corellas are found mixed with flocks of Little Corellas and/or flocks of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, as they utilise the same food.
Flocks of Cockatoos and Corellas also have the same habit of relying on a few birds to keep watch from tree perches, while the remainder of the flock feeds on the ground.
Another observer reported the ability of a Long-billed Corella drawing a stalk of Paspalum grass through its beak to strip moisture out of the grass.
They also have the habit of coming to water to drink at dawn, and again at dusk.
Before roosting for the night, they often perform swift aerial manoeuvres, chasing one another accompanied by loud screeching.
Most of the day is taken up feeding on the ground.
It is believed that Long-billed Corellas nest in this district along the Campaspe and Loddon Rivers, in hollow trees on the banks.
Little Corellas appear to prefer drier country north of the Murray River, but occasional itinerant small flocks have been observed further south, sometimes in the Bendigo District.

compiled by Bill Flentje.

EXCURSION NOTICES

SUNDAY JULY 17. DHARNYA CENTRE, BARMAH FOREST near township of Barmah

Aboriginal archaelogy and way of life. Expert staff will be our guides in the display building and in the forest.

Travel: It is 130 km from Bendigo to the Dharnya Centre, via the Midland Highway, Echuca, Moama, Cobb Highway, turnoff to Barmah, Barmah township and then a short drive into the Barmah Forest (sign-posted).

If you leave between 8.30 a.m. and 9.00 a.m., you will have plenty of time.
NOTE that we will not meet in Havlin Street before-hand.
Please arrange sharing of cars etc. at the Club meeting in July or elsewhere, as this saves a lot of time on the day.

Program:

10.30 approx.	Arrive at Dharnya.
10.30 - 11.00	Morning tea in kitchen-dining room.
11.00 - 12.30	Introduction by Howard Edwards (cultural officer). Time to inspect museum display, food plants, videos etc..
12.30 - 1.30	Lunch in kitchen - dining room.
1.30 - 3.00	Walk lead by Clive Woolard or Christine Crafter (Rangers): mounds, canoe trees etc.
3.00 - 3.30	Afternoon tea.
3.30	approx Depart.

Charge: There will be a small charge per head to cover $30.00 for use of kitchen dining room.

Notification: Please let John Lindner know whether you will be coming, so that we will know to expect you on the day.

The Dharnya Centre is a magnificent interpretative and educational resource, which you will probably find most inspiring. Do try and come.

SUNDAY AUGUST 14

Planted and remnant vegetation of the Loddon Plains. A visit to the famous Twigg property at Bear's Lagoon, and then on to various interesting natural features of the Loddon Plain vegetation. A lot of ground work is being done by two of our members who live in the area.
Full details in the July "Whirrakee".

ADVANCE NOTICE OF LONG CAMPS

Sat. Sept. 24 - Sat. Oct.1

Big Desert camp with Mid Murray F.N.C. Some details in April "Whirrakee". Further details to come.

Jan. 2-9, 1989

Mt. Hotham camp with Nature Photography Group. Accommodation at Jalanga Lodge. $50.00 per person on self-catering basis. Full payment must be made during October to Rob Watkins. Limit of 36 beds. (Camping in tents is not permissible at Mt. Hotham).

COMMITTEE REPORT MAY 18 1988

1. New members; John Guley, Mrs Val Rowley of Junortoun, Colin and Val. Lovejoy and family of Spring Gully, and Michael Gallagher of Bendigo.

2. Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has participated in preparation of Western Victorian F.N.C.A. submission to Department of Industry, Technology and Resources (D.I.T.R.) for suggested recommendations to the Mines Act.

3. A separate submission to D.I.T.R. will also be sent from our Club.

4. Possible purchase of a portable microphone/amplifier is being investigated.

5. We are presently checking the resource inventory of the proposed One Tree Hill Regional Park, as requested by Conservation, Forests and Lands.

6. Next meeting at J.Cleary's, Goynes Rd., Epsom, on 15 June at 8.00 p.m.

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LICHEN

by Graham Hill

It has become evident to me, from my regular outings in the bush, that the first plants to respond to the Autumn rains after the long dry summer, are the Lichen.

During the Summer the Lichen resembles a dry brittle, flat grey membrane that covers the ground, rocks and the trunks of trees, but after the rain it becomes soft and fleshy and greenish in colour.

Lichen are flowerless plants that vary greatly in colour and shape. Although they are plants, they are not a single organism. Each Lichen is an intimate association (symbiosis) between a fungus and an alga, which forms a compound organism with unique and special features of its own.

The Lichen is mainly composed of a complex branched network of fungal strands, with the algae usually confined to a narrow zone just below the surface. The partnership is undoubtedly a very successful one, and beneficial to both, as the fungus protects the alga from excess heat, light and drying out, and the alga is responsible for carrying out photosynthesis (the use of sunlight as an energy source to produce food from carbon di-oxide and water).

Lichens multiply by fragments that break from the plant and are scattered by the wind, although the fungus can reproduce by spore production. Lichen play an important part in helping to break down rock to form soils and also is used as a food source for both animals and man, and certain Lichen are used as dyes.

References: Biological Science (Web of Life)
World Book Encyclopaedia.
Encyclopaedia of Natural History.

BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Address for correspondence, P.O.Box 396, Bendigo 3550.

OFFICE BEARERS FOR 1987-88

PRESIDENT	Rob Moors	Mandurang South Rd.,R.S.D.Sedgwick	39 6254
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT	Win Demeo	Kamarooka, R.S.D.Raywood	36 9226
JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT	Bruce Wallace	20 Pearce St., Eaglehawk	46 7325
SECRETARY	Jane Cleary	24 Goynes Rd., Epsom	48 4396
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Glenise Moors	Mandurang South Rd., R.S.D.Sedgwick	39 6254
TREASURER	Helene Boon	Kamarooka, R.S.D.,Raywood	36 9252
MEMBERSHIP OFFICER	Win Demeo	Kamarooka, R.S.D., Raywood	36 9226
EXCURSION/SYLLABUS ORGANISER	John Lindner	Burns St., Axedale	39 7308
LIBRARIAN	Jane Cleary	24 Goynes Rd., Epsom	48 4396
WHIRRAKEE CO-ORDINATOR	Graham Hill	31 Curnow St., Golden Square.	42 4016

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in natural history. The membership subscription rates are: Single $13.00, Family $17.00, Pensioner and Children $8.00. Whirrakee subscription only $13.00.

General Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at the Conference Rooms, Department of Agriculture, Midland Highway, Epsom. Meetings start at 7.30 p.m. and conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Excursions The assembly point for excursions is outside the Special Services Complex in Havlin St. East, Bendigo, unless otherwise specified.
Full day excursions normally commence at 10.00 a.m. (usually on a Sunday).
Half day excursions normally commence at 2.00 p.m. and may be either a Saturday or Sunday. Day or half day excursions are usually held on the weekend following the General Meeting. Campouts are held several times in a year, usually co-inciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The B.F.N.C. has five sub-groups:-

The BIRD OBSERVERS GROUP meets on the first Friday of the month at the Agriculture Department, Epsom, at 7.30 p.m.

The BOTANY GROUP meets on the fourth Thursday of the month at 7.30 p.m. in member's homes as announced in the monthly Diary.
Convenor: Graham Hill (42 4016).

The CONSERVATION GROUP meets on an "as required" basis. As far as practicable, meetings details will be advertised in the "Whirrakee" Diary.
Convenor: Rod Fyffe, 546 Hargreaves St., Bendigo (43 7673).

The MAMMAL SURVEY GROUP meets on the third Thursday of the month, at 7.30 p.m. im member's homes as announced in the monthly Diary
President: Ian Fenselau, Buckland Street, White Hills 48 4384
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Cr., Kennington 43 4063

The JUNIOR FIELD NATURALISTS GROUP meets on the first Sunday in the month, from 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m., at the Education Department Special Services Complex, Havlin St. East, Bendigo. Group activities are open to the 8-18 years age group, together with their younger brothers and sisters, if accompanied by parents. (Parents will be needed for help with transportation on excursions.)
Organisers: Jane Cleary, Goynes Rd., White Hills. (48 4396)
Ian Fenselau, Buckland St., White HIlls (48 4384)

MR & MRS R B ALLEN
20 HOUSTON ST
BENDIGO 3550

- DIARY -

MEETINGS

Wed.June 8 — Subject: Mistletoe.
Speaker: Rod Orr.

Wed.July 13 — Subject: How should we manage our Kangaroos?
Speaker: Dr.W.N.Holsworth.

Wed.August 10 — Subject: North Queensland.
Speakers: Ern and Grace Albins.

EXCURSIONS

Sun.July 17 — Full day excursion to the Dharnya Centre in the Barmah Forest. The theme for the day will be Aboriginal archaeology and way of life in the area. Special guides will show us the forest and the display.
Full details on Page 15.

Sat.Sept.24-Sat.Oct. 1 — LONG CAMPOUT ADVANCE NOTICE Don't forget our long camp, in the Big Desert. See April Whirrakee P.18 for details.

Jan. 2-9 1989 — Mt. Hotham. Enjoy a week amongst the alpine flowers. Accommodation at Jalanga Lodge. Self cater basis -Cost $50.00 per person. Rob Watkins for further details. Ph.43 4891.

BIRD OBSERVERS GROUP

Fri.July 1 — Speaker: Mr.Joost Brouwer. Subject: Bird Projects.
Bird of the Night: Thornbills.

BOTANY GROUP

Thurs.June 23 — 7.30 p.m. at J.Kellam's home, 7 Patrick St., Bendigo.

MAMMAL SURVEY GROUP

Thurs.June 16 — 7.30 p.m. at Rob and Glen. Moors home, Sedgwick.
Speaker: Glen Moors. Subject: Ringtail Possum.

JUNIOR FIELD NATURALISTS GROUP

Due to School Holidays there will not be any activities in July.
A new syllabus will commence in August.

COMMITTEE MEETING

Wed.June 15 — 8.00 p.m. at J. Cleary's home, Goynes Rd., Epsom.